

April 15, 2002

**UNDER SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN
HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook provides information and procedures related to nomination and selection for the "Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research."
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** The principal change regarding specific information about the award timetable, from receipt of nominations through presentation of the award, has been incorporated.
- 3. RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VHA Directive 1204, dated August 7, 2001.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Health Services Research and Development Service (124) is responsible for the contents of this VHA Handbook.
- 5. RESCISSION:** None.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working date of April 2007.

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CONTENTS

UNDER SECRETARY’S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
1. Purpose	1
2. Background	1
3. Scope	1
4. Description of Award	1
5. Review	2
6. Responsibilities	2
APPENDIX	
A Instructions for Preparation and Submission of Nominations for the Under Secretary’s Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research	A-1

UNDER SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook provides information and procedures related to nomination and selection for the "Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research."

2. BACKGROUND

The "Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research" was established in 1998 in recognition of the importance of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)'s health services research program and its vital link to the health care of veterans and the public. VHA annually invites nominations for this award in recognition of the highest level of achievement in health services research. A committee convened by the Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) reviews all nominations and recommends one VA investigator to the Under Secretary for Health for approval.

3. SCOPE

a. **Award Criteria.** A committee appointed by the Director, HSR&D, reviews the nominations, based on the following criteria:

(1) The candidate's research has added significantly to the understanding of factors that affect the health of America's veterans or has led to a major improvement in the quality of veterans' health care.

(2) The candidate has made a substantive contribution to the future of VA health services research by inspiring a new generation of investigators through excellence in training and mentorship.

(3) The candidate has enhanced the visibility and reputation of VA research through national leadership in the research community.

b. **Eligibility.** Each nominee must be employed by VA at least 5/8 time. The research contribution leading to the nomination must have been carried out in VA, and it must relate clearly to VA's research mission.

4. DESCRIPTION OF AWARD

Awardees receive a \$5,000 cash award and an inscribed plaque commemorating the awardee's achievement. Awardees with a currently funded, nationally peer-reviewed research project (VA Merit Review, or non-VA research support) receive an additional \$50,000 per year for up to 3 years to support that research. ***NOTE:*** *This award is presented at an appropriate national meeting of health services researchers.*

5. REVIEW

The Director, HSR&D appoints the review committee, comprised of experienced health services researchers with and without VA affiliation. The committee includes the chairman of the HSR&D Scientific Review and Evaluation Board, a member of the HSR&D Career Development Review Group, and others familiar with the scientific peer review process and HSR&D goals. **NOTE:** *All nominations that are submitted in accordance with procedures described in Appendix A are forwarded to the review committee.*

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

Following the committee's review of nominations, the award coordinator submits a request for approval of the nomination and a request for a monetary award of \$5,000 (using VA Form 4659, Incentive Awards Recommendation and Approval) to the Under Secretary for Health, through the Director, HSR&D, and the Chief Research and Development Officer. After approval by the Under Secretary, the award coordinator instructs the sponsoring VA medical center to provide the monetary award and to request reimbursement from VHA Central Office. The award coordinator is also responsible for obtaining commemorative plaques for the recipient and sponsoring VA medical center, and for coordinating the award presentation.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION OF NOMINATIONS
FOR THE UNDER SECRETARY'S AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT
IN HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH**

1. NOMINATION. Nominations may be made by other scientists, the local Research and Development (R&D) committee, the Scientific Review and Evaluation Board (SREB), or the SREB Subcommittee for Career Development, through the Director, Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D). No more than one nomination may be submitted by each Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center in a given year. Nomination packages are prepared by the Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for R&D and submitted by the VA medical center Director.

***NOTE:** Persons wishing to nominate a candidate must contact the ACOS for R&D at the candidate's VA medical center of employment.*

2. CONTENT. Each nomination must include the following:

a. A statement from the VA medical center Director, presenting the rationale for the nomination.

b. A summary of the nominee's research achievements, specifying contributions to knowledge, to the advancement of the field, and the specific relevance to veterans and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) (not to exceed three pages). Additional evidence of the impact of the nominee's work may be submitted in any form (not to exceed six additional pages).

c. Nominee's complete and current curriculum vitae and bibliography.

d. Letters of support from the local R&D Committee and the Dean's Committee of the affiliated medical school.

e. A letter of support from an investigator (who is not an employee of the nominee's VA medical center or on the faculty of the affiliated medical school).

f. Reprints of three of the nominee's major, original research publications.

3. FORMAT. Nominations should consist of single-spaced typed pages. Use only letter-quality print. The font size should be at least 11 point with no more than 15 characters per inch and no more than 6 lines per inch.

4. SUBMISSION. Submit the original and 10 copies to:

Director, HSR&D (124)
Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20420

5. DUE DATE. Nominations are reviewed annually. The deadline for receipt of nominations is October 1.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **R&D Committee.** The local R&D Committee evaluates the merits of all candidates proposed by the VA medical center and recommends one candidate to the VA medical center Director.

b. **Director, VA Medical Center.** The medical center Director recommends the candidate to the Director, HSR&D.

c. **ACOS for R&D.** The ACOS for R&D ensures that all required documentation accompanies the nomination letter from the VA medical center Director and that the complete nomination package is submitted to HSR&D for receipt by the specified due date.

d. **Award Coordinator.** The award coordinator ensures that all nominations receive both administrative and scientific review, and attends to administrative matters related to the presentation of the award.

e. **Award Review Group.** The review group evaluates all applications and recommends one candidate, based on the specified review criteria, to the Director, HSR&D. If no candidate meets the high standards attendant to this award, no award will be given.

f. **Director, HSR&D.** The Director, HSR&D, or designee, is responsible for:

- (1) Appointing the review group and approval or disapproval of the recommended candidate.
- (2) Forwarding the nomination to the Chief R&D Officer for approval.
- (3) Ensuring presentation of the award at an appropriate, national, public venue.

g. **Chief R&D Officer.** The Chief R&D Officer, or designee, is responsible for:

(1) Approving selection of the nominee and submitting VA Form 4659, Incentive Awards Recommendation and Approval, to the Under Secretary for Health for award approval.

(2) Written notification to the nominee's VA medical center Director, when the nomination is approved.

h. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health is responsible for approving the nomination. At the national ceremony, the Under Secretary, or designee, is responsible for presenting the award to the honored researcher and to the VA medical center Director.

i. **Administrative Officer for R&D.** The Administrative Officer for R&D, at the nominee's VA facility authorizes payment of:

- (1) A one-time cash award of \$5,000 to the honoree's VA medical center.

(2) \$50,000 per year, for up to 3 years, for research support.

7. TIMETABLE

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| a. Nominations due at VA Central Office | on or before October 1. |
| b. Committee review of nominations | by December 1. |
| c. Notification of outcome | by January 5. |
| d. Presentation of award | by March 31. |